

Crawford-Governor Porter House  
407 Dunlap Street  
Paris  
Henry County  
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-176

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TENN,  
40-PARIS,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CRAWFORD-GOVERNOR PORTER HOUSE

HABS No. TN-176

Location: 407 Dunlap Street, Paris, Henry County, Tennessee.

Latitude: 36° 17' 56"

Longitude: 88° 19' 22"

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Miss Margaret Porter.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: This town residence was constructed by Thomas W. Crawford about 1850. It is most notable as being the residence of James Davis Porter between 1887 and 1912, after he served two terms as Governor of Tennessee (1875-78). The house is a typical example of the vernacular architecture of northwest Tennessee and southern Kentucky.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1850.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of title may be reconstructed from Deed and Will Books of Henry County, Tennessee.

1825 Deed September 15, 1825, recorded December 16, 1825 in  
Book A, page 408 (100 acres)  
George G. Boyd and Abner Boyd  
to  
Spearman Holland

1827 Deed November 14, 1827, not recorded but cited in deed  
to adjacent 86 acre tract, in  
Book A page 470 (14 acres)  
Spearman Holland  
to  
William Armour and Henry Lake

1832 Deed July 24, 1832, recorded January 30, 1833 in  
Book D page 137  
William Armour and Henry Lake  
to  
Solomon Armour

- 184\_ Decree of Chancery Court, not recorded but cited in  
regard to another tract owned by Armour, in  
Book H page 156  
Heirs of Solomon Armour  
to  
John B. DeWitt
- 1848 Deed June 6, 1848, recorded June 6, 1848 in  
Book I page 424 (\$500.00)  
John B. DeWitt (of Mississippi)  
to  
Thomas W. Crawford
- 1855 Deed September 27, 1855, recorded October 2, 1855 in  
Book L page 698 (12 acres - \$6500.00)  
Thomas W. Crawford  
to  
Mary G. Swayne
- 1859 Deed December 30, 1859, recorded January 6, 1860 in  
Book N page 863 (\$8500.00)  
John F. Swayne and wife Mary G. Swayne  
to  
John H. Dunlap
- 1875 Will September 23, 1874, probated January 6, 1875 and  
recorded in Will Book J page 523  
John H. Dunlap  
to  
Marietta Dunlap (wife)
- 1887 Deed February 21, 1887, recorded February 21, 1887 in  
Book Y page 15  
Marietta Dunlap  
to  
James D. Porter
- 1912 Deed September 2, 1912, recorded September 2, 1912 in  
Book 14 page 576  
Mrs. Susan D. Porter (widow of James D.)  
to  
Joel M. Porter
- 1937 Will January 10, 1936, probated April 9, 1937 and  
recorded in Will Book 4 page 342  
Joel M. Porter  
to  
Lona W. Porter (his wife)

1955 Will September 26, 1939, probated August 1, 1955 and  
recorded in Will Book 7 page 81  
Lona W. Porter  
to  
Margaret Porter and Mrs. Julia Woolfolk (daughters)

4. Alterations and additions: The house appears to have been built in at least two stages. The west front portion was probably originally one room deep on either side of the central hall. The cornice on the north side reveals a splice which indicated that the cornice turned at that point. It is possible that the north wing was one story high because the floor level within changes by 8", and the floor material changes. An interesting feature is the brick patterning and the point of change. The south and west facades have Flemish bond while the rest of the building is common bond. The change is made at the northwest and southeast corners of the house.

B. Historical Context: Thomas W. Crawford was the first owner of the present house, built shortly after he purchased the land in 1848. Family tradition states that his first two children were born there; he sold the home in 1855. Crawford's business activities began with the mercantile partnership of his brothers-in-law (Shelbourn Loving and George M. Porter). On Porter's death the firm became Loving and Crawford; in 1848 Thomas W. Crawford continued the business alone as the "Paris Cash Hardware House," while Loving pursued the medical profession. The twenty-six year old Crawford was the second wealthiest citizen of Paris in the 1850 census, with real estate valued at \$15,500.00. Later he owned an iron foundry at Tennessee Ridge in Stewart County.

In 1859 ownership of the house passed into the hands of the family which now owns it. General John H. Dunlap was an attorney, deeply involved in the political and educational affairs of the county from the 1830s until his death in 1875. His eldest daughter married James D. Porter, whom he had trained in the legal profession. In 1887 Dunlap's widow sold the home to this son-in-law, by then nationally prominent and almost sixty years of age. For the next twenty-five years his name and reputation became attached to the house.

James Davis Porter was born at Paris, Tennessee in 1828 and died there in 1912. As a member of the state legislature he drafted the "Porter Resolutions," in 1861, by which the state was pledged to stand with the South in the event of war. In the Confederate Army he served as adjutant general to General B. F. Cheatham. He was Governor of Tennessee for two terms, 1875-79; President of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railroad, 1880-84; and Assistant Secretary of State under Grover Cleveland in 1885. During his years of occupancy of the Crawford-Porter House he was United States Ambassador

to Chile (1893) and Chancellor of the University of Nashville. He secured from the Peabody Fund the endowment of a million dollars which established, as successor to the University of Nashville, the George Peabody College for Teachers.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house is a typical example of vernacular architecture of northwest Tennessee and southern Kentucky. Interior trim and classical fireplaces are the most notable features of the house.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in fair condition; there are some structural failures in the brick walls notably above the windows of the west (front) facade. Maintenance has been satisfactory.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building measures 54'-4" from north to south on the west front and 64'-0" east to west on the north side. The east (rear) end measures 21'-2" wide and the south end measures 23'-1-1/4". It is 26'-6" to the edge of the roof and 31'-8" to the ridge. The house is five bays wide and two stories tall except for the east end of the north wing which is one story. The plan is that of an L, with the "legs" being on the north and west sides.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: The brick walls are painted red. The west and south elevations have a Flemish bond pattern while the north and east facades and the inner sides of the L have common bond with headers every sixth course.
4. Structural system, framing: The brick bearing walls support floor joists which span the width of the house. The roof is constructed of 2-1/4" x 3-1/4" rafters with a 1" x 5" ridge board.
5. Porches, stoops: There is a two level porch (8'-0" x 17'-6") projecting from the center of the front west facade. Its four 3-1/2" cast-iron columns and 2'-10-1/2" cast-iron railings are in sharp contrast to the Greek Revival doorway behind. It is possible that the porch was altered at a later date. It has a bracketed second floor cornice and cut board brackets between the columns and horizontal decks. There are double stairways (four risers each), one at each end of this porch.

Within the L on the rear side of the house is a porch extending to both the south and east ends. It is two stories except at the east end of the north wing where it is one story. It has 6" square columns on the first floor and 5-1/2" columns on the second floor which resemble greek-crosses with 1/4" round infills. There is a simple 3'-0" railing on the second floor; no railing on the first floor. There is a stairway to the second floor located along the south wall of the north wing. It has eighteen risers in a single straight run (8" risers, 11-3/4" treads, 1-1/2" nosing, width of 2'-8"). The 2'-5" railing has 1-3/8" balusters similar to the balcony railings.

6. Chimneys: There are four chimneys on the house. Two are located at the terminations of the north/south gable. They straddle the ridge and are flush with the end walls but the cornice crosses to the outside of the chimney. The third chimney is situated on the east end of the two-story addition. It straddles the ridge and projects 4" from the wall. The cornice also passes behind this chimney. The fourth chimney is located at the east end of the one-story addition. It is similarly aligned but is a simple, unarticulated chimney. The first three chimneys are rectangular and have eight courses of brick projecting to form a cap.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The west entrance door is flanked by unfluted Doric columns, sidelights and paneled pilasters. It is topped with a transom of clear and colored rectangles and squares the full width of the composition. The sidelights have clear and colored glass squares. The door measures 3'-2" x 7'-1-1/4" x 1-3/8" (glass panels with two wood panels over and nine below); the entire composition is 11'-10" wide and 10'-4" high. The second floor west has a composition similar to the first but varying in details. The columns are shorter and have carved blocks above. The transom and sidelights have clear glass. The overall composition measures 9'-0" wide x 8'-5-1/2" high. The second floor is 18-1/2" above the deck.

Opening onto the rear porch are four first floor doors. On the north wing the door to the right is 2'-10" x 6'-10-1/4" x 1-3/8" and has five horizontal panels. That to the left is 3'-0" x 6'-7" x 1-3/8" and has a glass panel. On the west wing the door to the right is 3'-2" x 6'-5" x 1-1/2" with two vertical panels. The one on the left is 3'-0" x 7'-0" x 1-1/2" and has an etched glass panel over a wood panel. It is topped with an etched glass transom. On the second floor there is one door to the rear porch. It is located on the

north wing near the corner of the L. It measures 2'-8" x 6'-7-1/2" x 1-3/8" with a glass panel (two lights square) over one horizontal and two vertical panels.

All doors have screen doors.

- b. Windows: The first floor windows measure 4'-0" x 6'-7-3/4" and have wood double-hung sash with six-over-nine lights. The second floor windows measure 4'-0" x 6'-3-1/2" with six-over-six lights. There are a few windows which are shorter than these mentioned, but all have six-over-six lights. Originally all openings were shuttered. The shutters and their hardware have been removed.

In the south and north gable ends there is a pair of semicircular louvered openings for attic ventilation. The east gable end of the two-story addition has the gable triangles filled with horizontal louvers for attic ventilation.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The house roof is gabled. The main gable parallels the building front and runs north to south. A second gable intersects this front portion of the house. It is at the same level as the front gable. A third gable roof covers the one-story rear addition and butts into the two-story portion of the house. The front porch has a flat roof. The second floor rear porches and the roof of the one-story addition have shed roofs. All roofs are covered with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a box cornice at the base of each roof. On the front portion of the house, the cornice returns 3'-6" around the north and south faces while the cornice molding continues up the gable. The cornice extends 18" from the wall and is 20" high.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The building is L-shaped in plan. The base of the L faces west with the back facing north. It has a central hall at the center of the west front and it is flanked by parlors on each side. In the north wing there is a dining room, a service core and the kitchen. The service core contains a butler's pantry, pantry and the basement stairway.

The second floor is similar to the first except that the north wing is shorter. It has three chambers and a bathroom. The north wing is 8" above the floor level of the west front.

The basement extends only under the north wing of the house. There is an inaccessible crawl space under the west front.

2. Stairways: The central stairhall contains a U-shaped stairway which gives access to the second floor. Ascent begins on the north side of the hall and is thirteen risers (7-1/4" risers, 10" treads, 1" nosing, 3'-5" width) to a 3'-9" wide landing balcony extending across the east side of the hall (over the rear door). There are six additional risers along the south side to the upper hall balcony. The cylindrical handrail is supported by 5/8" x 1" rectangular balusters. There is a turned newel at the base and turned posts at the balcony corners.

The basement stairway is to the west of the kitchen and access is made from it. There are thirteen risers including winders to the right. Risers are 7" high. Treads are 7" x 2'-8-1/2".

3. Flooring: The basement has a concrete slab floor. The first floor has 1-1/2" oak tongue-and-groove boards. The second floor flooring is 6" to 7" pine boards. The kitchen has linoleum flooring; the bath has ceramic tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wood lath and plaster. The dining room has a wood dado molding 2'-6" above the floor. The kitchen has a wainscot 4'-1" high with scored plaster in a tile pattern above. The first floor ceiling height is 10'-6-3/4"; second floor ceiling height is 10'-6".
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Doors vary in size from 2'-8" wide to 3'-0" wide and 6'-6" to 6'-9" high and are 1-3/8" thick. They have either two vertical panels (west portion) or five horizontal panels (north wing). All doors are trimmed with 8-1/2" surrounds on the first floor. They have carved corner blocks. The second floor doors are trimmed with 6" surrounds. These surrounds are original to the house.

The closet doors to the left of the second floor north chamber fireplace are solid board and 1" thick.

6. Decorative features and trim: There is a window over the landing balcony which emits light to the hall. In addition, the west wall on both levels is opened with the door-window combinations. The window openings are splayed and the jambs are paneled.



There is a cupboard to the left of the north parlor fireplace. It has double doors which have a mirror glass panel in each leaf. The doors to the china cabinet to the left of the dining room fireplace has glass filled doors. The cabinet doors in the butler's pantry are also glass.

The fireplaces are very interesting. While they all have wood mantels, each of the first floor mantels is slightly different. The fireplace in the south parlor has a mantel 5'-5" high with Tuscan columns and Ionic entablature. The facing is brick while the hearth is marble. The firebox is cast-iron and brick. The mantel in the north parlor features fluted Doric columns and Ionic entablature. Its facing is tile and hearth is brick. The dining room mantel is finished with fluted pilasters and Ionic entablature. It has a brick hearth. Second floor mantels are similar to one another. All have plain pilasters with an entablature which juts out over the pilasters.

7. Hardware: Standard hardware is used. Butt hinges, knobs and knob plates are found. There is one box lock on the entrance door. Some butt hinges have a stamped pattern on the wings.
8. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Forced air heating system is used. The equipment is located in the basement.
  - b. Lighting: Electric power has been added but has not been fully integrated into the house.
  - c. Plumbing: Plumbing has been added. There are two full bathrooms on the second floor, one of which was added into the northeast corner of the south bedroom. A half bath was added below the main stairway.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The site is situated on the east side of Dunlap Street between Walnut Street (on the north) and Jackson (on the south). The lot extends about one half block deep. The site is slightly elevated above street level. The house is oriented with its main facade facing to the west. The long flank of the house faces north. The rear porch faces toward the south and east.
2. Landscaping: There are several large trees on the site. There does not appear to have been a landscape plan. There are several

tulip trees and walnut trees in addition to a variety of others. A 6-1/2 foot wide brick walkway connects the building to the sidewalk.

3. Outbuildings: Directly behind the north wing of the house there stands a service building (possibly a former slaves' quarters and/or kitchen). See Crawford-Governor Porter House, Service Building, HABS No. TN-176-A, for a photograph and written data.

There is a modern brick garage to the southeast of the service building. It has a gable roof and two auto stalls.

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August 2, 3, 1972

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### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Early views: There is a photograph of the house in the book by Green, cited below, which shows that there has been no significant change since 1900 to the west front.
- B. Interview: Interview with Flo Crawford Chambers conducted August 29, 1972.
- C. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

Brandau, Roberta Seawell, ed. History of Homes and Gardens of Tennessee. Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1936, p. 310.

Green, W. P. The City of Paris and Henry County, Tennessee. Paris: Paris Publishing Co., 1900.

"Hon. James D. Porter," Confederate Veteran, XX (January 1912), p. 290.

Speer, William S., comp. Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans. Nashville: Albert B. Tavel, 1888, pp. 35-40.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1972 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the West Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona), project supervisor, and Richard H. Hulan, project historian (Nashville), with architects James D. Skelton (University of Illinois) and Mark P. Frederickson (University of Arizona) and student architects Darrell K. Pattison (University of Cincinnati) and John P. Vergos (University of Tennessee) at the Memphis, Tennessee field office on the campus of Memphis State University.

The photographs were taken in the Spring of 1974 by Jack E. Boucher, a HABS photographer.

Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the data in the Spring of 1985 for transmittal to the Library of Congress.